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# Christian Guana-Jarrin

Christian Guana-Jarrin  
*Andrews University*

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Being raised as a Roman Catholic in Ecuador was just part of the norm or tradition, and bearing a name that friends used to make fun of at times while in primary school was just something that did not bother me. I did not care. But things can radically change when we experience the manifestation of becoming our true selves, and so it was when I became a Christian. I was no longer part of an old tradition that was so rooted in my culture. I realized that my name literally meant what I had just become—but who is a Christian? And what does it mean to be a Christian?

I made my way to the University of Sydney and earned a bachelor's in computer engineering, then embarked on an awesome IT career during which I traveled through 32 countries—I am so thankful to God for this. But coming back to Latin America where I also worked in a senior IT position started to shape a new me. Yes, I was already a Christian, but I knew something more was missing.

I believe that Christianity should go beyond the four walls of a sanctuary, and living in Mexico City for four years radically changed my understanding of who a Christian is and what it means to be one. You see, Latin America is a special land, a place of so much history, culture and beauty in nature. But at the same time, it is a place where globalized countries have countless social problems due to political systems that have barely tried to develop and provide equal access to opportunities for all society. And so you see injustice, poverty, insecurity, corruption, crime, hunger and all the problems that Latin American governments face, such as improving access and quality of public services, relationships between politicians and society, police behavior, health, social activism and even the environment. Do we just accept the world as it is and go with the flow? After all, this is the easiest thing to do, right?

This is when I, with other like-minded people, started to do something for others without even knowing how it was going to end (and I'm still on that journey). We visited orphanages, parks where homeless people lived and nursing homes. We did this for Christ, sharing the good news of salvation, and the whole experience silently started to shape a new me, a new Christian. Later on, things got even bigger as we organized social and medical fairs in rural communities of different states in Mexico. We helped many people by bringing them groceries, clothes, shoes and toys for the children. We presented Christmas plays sharing the stories of Jesus and afterwards brought doctors with free medicine and glasses. When you understand that seeking a faith experience is about giving yourself to others, this radically changes how you understand what it means to be a Christian. Christians need to change the world by committing to a true revolution of thought and action.

This experience of giving ourselves to others brought me to Andrews University, the mecca of Adventist theology, and I am completing a Master of Divinity (MDiv) in order to go out and continue changing the world with Christ. As I finished my first year in the MDiv program, there was a poster on campus advertising the need of missionaries in Cuba for one whole school year. I put my name down. After all, it was this notion of giving myself to others that brought me to Andrews. At the end of the interview and selection processes, I was one of two student missionaries who entered Cuba after 55 years—the last Christian missionary had been forced to leave the country in 1963 due to the Cuban revolution. And going to Cuba confirmed once again that as Christians, going with the flow is just not enough. We need to give ourselves to others,

which in the end is what it means to be Christian (John 3:16 becomes so much more vivid when we consider the word “gave”—God has given us the supreme example).

I am thankful to my God for all that He used me to do for His glory in the Cuban city of Santiago during the one year of service there. I am grateful for the new friends made and the CDAR ministry that is led by youth and young adults and still causing a difference to this day (if you are interested, search for “CDAR” on YouTube). In spite of all my wrongdoings and failures, I thank God for the many people touched by the Gospel, the 48 precious souls who committed their lives to God and the 20 that I continue to pray for and stay in contact with, hoping they will one day accept Christ as their Savior. Ultimately, I thank God for confirming once again who a Christian is and what it means to be one.

As we live in a world where practically every human being is somehow dependent on the continued flow of money, goods, culture and people, let us give ourselves to others in our circles of influence. Let us go beyond the four walls of a sanctuary and understand that going with the flow is just not enough. Let us rekindle the spark that ignites a commitment toward a true revolution of thought and action. Let us wholeheartedly change this world with Christ and for Christ! Maranatha!

“Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (GNT).



Christian Guana-Jarrin